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Philadelphia. Friends Yearly Meeting.
Minute of Counsel and Encouragement.
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OF

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ADDRESSED TO ITS MEMBERS,

BY THE

YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,

HELD IN PHILADELPHIA,

Fourth month, 1867.

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HAVING, at times during the several sittings of the Yearly Meeting been favored with the overshadowing of the blessed Head of the Church, the hearts of many have been contrited under a sense of that mercy which is both ancient and new, and a deep felt religious concern has been begotten on account of apparent deficiencies, evidencing among many of our members an undue pursuit of and attachment to the things that pertain to this life only. There has been felt to be cause for an humbling acknowledgment that we, as a people, fall far short of a full exemplification in life and conduct of that holy religion which is designed to bring man out of a state of nature wherein his treasures and his enjoyments are of the earth, earthy, into the

glorious liberty of the sons of God, whose durable riches are laid up in heaven, and whose delight is in communion with their Creator through the aid of the Spirit of our holy Mediator in the heart, and in obeying his divine law written there. With this conviction, an earnest, affectionate travail has been raised after a more perfect redemption from the spirit of the world, and a more general devotion to that watchful, self-denying life which is inseparable from a true disciple of Christ.

We cannot doubt that the Lord has preserved within the professing Church a noble band of witnesses to the spirituality of the Gospel and to the transforming power of his grace. These, whatever their profession, and whether conspicuous in good works or more obscure, are the true Israel of God, whose circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God. But there is abundant evidence that a large portion of those who claim the name of Christians, are satisfied with an outside performance of rites and ceremonies, and substitute obedience to the moral law and works of their own righteousness, for submission to the crucifying power of the cross of Christ, and walking in that strait and

narrow way in which alone is found the flock of his companions.

Thus, there are influences operating in the present day, both within and without the pale of our Society, the tendency of which is to draw the members from the simplicity and spirituality of our Christian profession, and from a faithful and consistent support of the principles and testimonies of the gospel as always held by us, into a nearer conformity to the religion, the worship, and ways of the world. These influences are apparent in the same disposition to shun the daily self-denial and cross-bearing belonging to the Christian; in the effort to reduce religion very much to a formal and intellectual work, which the unaided powers of man may originate or promote; to smooth and widen the path to salvation, so as to make it more easy and attractive to the tastes and inclinations of the unregenerate mind; and to substitute works of a benevolent or ostensibly religious character, for lowly watchful waiting, in silent introversion, at the feet of Jesus, to be taught of Him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who only can savingly instruct in the things which belong to the soul's peace.

Minds which have been favored with the pre-

cious, tendering visitations of the Lord's Spirit, have been turned from the vanities of the world to seek the durable riches and righteousness of heaven, and in inward, silent prostration to bear the operation of the Spirit of judgment and burning, to purify from the pollution of sin, and to create them new creatures in Christ Jesus, may, it is to be feared, have had their attention diverted from this indispensable work in themselves, to their serious injury, by being persuaded that it is necessary they should at once become active in undertakings professedly designed to promote the cause of religion; while some who may be a little further advanced, have been dwarfed and withered by being urged into performances to which the Master had not called them; for which they had not undergone the requisite preparation, and which were mainly attributable to the unsanctified activity of the natural will.

The awakened mind is readily influenced by the desire to be doing something for Christ's cause, and unless it watches diligently unto prayer, in the Light of the Lord, the will of man prompts this desire into unbidden activity; takes pleasure in it; gradually dims the spiritual vision, and leads to the substitution of these formal ser-

vices, for the patient abiding under the heart-changing and crucifying work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, which is in danger of settling down at ease in them. We should ever bear in mind the words of our dear Lord, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and also that we are told such "as kindle a fire, compass themselves about with sparks, walk in the light of their fire, and in the sparks that they have kindled, shall have this of the Lord's hand; that they shall lie down in sorrow.'

In the feeling of Christian love and interest for all our dear Friends, and especially for the younger class, we tenderly desire that we may all diligently watch against these plausible and delusive tendencies, and strive to dwell much inward with Christ Jesus, in reverent, silent retirement from the many alluring voices that are abroad, seeking above all to be taught of Him who is the only saving Teacher, and who will not fail to give true peace and rest to all who come to Him, take His yoke upon them, and learn of Him, who is meek and lowly of heart.

Thus, the work of sanctification will be carried on; all the preparatory baptisms of the Holy Spirit and of fire will be endured; and when the period arrives in which the Lord sees meet that any should engage in more public or active ser-

vice, His call and command will be distinctly and intelligibly heard, pointing out what, and when, and where; and He will vouchsafe his own wisdom and strength to perform faithfully whatever He requires, and cause His blessing to rest upon it; and without these, all our efforts to advance His cause must prove unavailing.

We would encourage the humble, diffident children of our Heavenly Father, who are brought under His preparing hand, to yield themselves, in the unquestioning obedience of faith, to the gentle movings of his Spirit, whatever service it may point to, remembering that the gracious Shepherd of the sheep has declared that, when He putteth forth his own, He goeth before them, and they follow Him, for they know his voice. And though you may deeply feel your own weakness and unworthiness, and be ready to tremble at the prospect of engaging in his service; yet, as you keep humble, looking singly to Him for help and direction, you will thankfully experience the truth of His precious words: "My grace is sufficient for thee—my strength is made perfect in weakness."

In the progress of general improvement the press has become a powerful agency for spreading abroad a knowledge of the truths contained

in the Holy Scriptures; but it is not less continuously active in disseminating moral poison, and also plausible views and speculations respecting the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion, well calculated to bewilder and mislead. Among the latter, are publications both in periodicals and in other forms, inculcating, in some, boldly and unreservedly, in others more covertly and insidiously, the opinion that all that is necessary to ensure salvation is an intellectual belief—upon the authority of holy Scripture, that Christ has paid the penalty for our sins, and has covered our frailty and shortcomings with the robe of his righteousness; keeping altogether out of view the necessity of repentance, the washing of regeneration, and that saving faith in the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, is the gift of the Father to those whom He draws to his dear Son.

We affectionately caution all our members against receiving into their families or giving currency to either books or papers calculated to lower the standard of Christian morality, or which advocate such erroneous doctrines, fully believing the latter are calculated to minister to the natural propensity to shun the cross and to betray the soul into carnal security.

The preciousness of our testimony to the prerogative of the Head of the Church to dispense to whomsoever He will, the gift of Gospel ministry, and against all ministry originating or performed in the will and wisdom of man, has been renewedly felt at this time; having been revived by accounts received that a few of our members have not been sufficiently on their guard against lowering its importance and retarding its spread. Let us ever bear in remembrance, dear Friends, that as it is only under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit that acceptable worship can be performed, so it is alone, when by the transforming power of his grace the Head of the Church has prepared any for his service, and bestowed a special gift therefor, that true gospel ministry can be exercised; and this not in their own time and way, but when and where He freshly qualifies and appoints. Those who are thus called and commissioned, as they wait on their holy Leader, find they have nothing of their own to glory in, for, at his command, and as He gives the matter, a necessity is laid upon them; yea, woe is unto them if they preach not the gospel. Hence they are bound freely to dispense that which they also have freely received, looking for and accepting no other reward

than that given by their Master for obeying his commands.

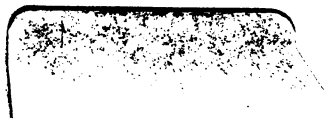
Fallible man has no right to take this sacred office on himself, unless called of God, and no system of study, or learning, or prescribed form of ordination, can confer the qualifications for performing its solemn and responsible functions. May all our members be incited to increased watchfulness and care in reference to this precious testimony for which our worthy predecessors suffered deeply, and which we believe is still intimately connected with the welfare of our Society. We would also encourage them to a faithful attendance of all our religious meetings, striving therein for ability to perform that worship which is in Spirit and in Truth.

Amid the discouragements and deficiencies which are apparent in our beloved Society, we are comforted in the evidences afforded, that the Lord's love and life-giving presence are not withdrawn; but that, in his long forbearing mercy, He is waiting to bless us and to do us good. Bowed under a grateful sense of his unmerited goodness, we earnestly desire that our love and obedience to Him may increase and abound; and that, under the tendering and cementing influence of this love, we may be banded together as breth-

ren in a fervent engagement to encourage and help one another in rallying to the pure spiritual doctrines, and the precious testimonies of the Gospel, which our religious Society was raised up to proclaim afresh to the world, and in a steadfast endeavor faithfully to live up to them. Then, we believe, that He who gathered us to be a people, will, in tender love and mercy, turn his hand upon us, purely purge away our dross, and take away all our tin; and will restore to us judges as at the first, and counsellors as at the beginning; and cause us to be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city—even a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid; that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Extracted from the Minutes.

JOSEPH SCATTERGOOD,
Clerk to the Meeting this year.



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